

Adopted Revisions to the  
SIGNS AND OUTDOOR ADVERTISING REGULATIONS

City of Hartford Planning and Zoning Commission  
effective May 6, 2008.

**Additions are indicated in boldface type**  
**Deletions are shown in boldface/strikethrough**

## **ARTICLE VII**

### Sec. 1006. Definitions.

The following words, terms and phrases, when used in this article, shall have the meanings ascribed to them in this section, except where the context clearly indicates a different meaning:

*Banners, streamers and pennants* are non-reflective signs or decorations made of cloth or plastic ~~which are hung temporarily with ropes and strings.~~

*Marquee* means any hood, canopy, awning or permanent construction that projects from a wall of a building, usually above an entrance.

*Portable sign* is any sign not permanently attached to the ground or other permanent structure, or a sign designed to be transported, including, but not limited to, signs designed to be transported by means of wheels; signs converted to A- or T-frames; menu and sandwich board signs; balloons used as signs; umbrellas used for advertising, except those associated with established outdoor cafes; and signs attached to or painted on vehicles parked and visible from the public right-of-way, unless said vehicle is used in the normal day-to-day operations of the business.

*Roof sign, integral* is any identification sign erected or constructed as an integral or essentially integral part of a normal roof structure of any design, such that no part of the sign extends vertically above the highest portion of the roof and such that no part of the sign is separated from the rest of the roof by a space of more than six (6) inches.

*Sign* means any device and all parts thereof which are used to advertise products, goods, services or otherwise promote the sale or rental of objects or identify objects for sale or for rent or the occupancy or use of any land, structure or building, including signs painted on windows and paper signs attached to windows. Window displays shall not be considered signs.

*Sign, abandoned* means any sign whose use is discontinued, provided that the owner of the sign intended to discontinue such use

*Sign, business* means a sign which directs attention only to a business, commodity, service, activity, or product sold, conducted or offered upon the premises where such sign is located and permanently affixed.

*Sign, directional* means a sign which guides or directs pedestrian or vehicular traffic.

*Sign, double-faced* means a sign with two (2) faces, neither face exceeding the maximum area allowed for the zoning district in which it is located, and where the faces are mounted back to back not more than eighteen (18) inches apart and parallel, or where the interior angle formed by the intersection of the two (2) faces is thirty (30) degrees or less.

***Sign, changeable electronic* means any type of sign displayed or illuminated by electronic or digital means whereby the content can be changed automatically at short intervals controlled either on site or remotely.**

*Sign face* means a plane defined by the continuous perimeter enclosing the extreme limits of the message or messages of the sign, including other representation or material or color lying within the plane that draws attention to a message or messages. Any structural element lying within the sign face and not forming an integral part of the sign content, or any molding which is eighteen (18) inches or less in width and lies within the sign face, shall not be considered part of the area of the sign face.

*Sign, gross area of* means as defined by the following table:

Single-faced sign: gross area = area of the single face,

Double-faced sign: gross area = area of largest face or area of one (1) face if both faces have equal area,

Multiple-faced sign: gross area = combined area of all faces.

*Sign, ground* means a sign suspended or supported by one or more uprights or braces anchored in the ground with no more than thirty (30) inches clearance from the bottom of the sign to the ground below.

*Sign, identification* means a sign on the premises, bearing the name of a subdivision, the name of a group housing project or of a school, college, park, church or other public or quasi-public facility, or of a professional or firm nameplate, or the name of the business, or name of the person, firm or business entity occupying the premises, but bearing information pertaining only to the premises on which such sign is located.

*Sign, multiple-faced* means a sign with two (2) or more faces, except a double-faced sign.

*Sign, outdoor advertising* means a sign which directs attention to a business, commodity, service or activity which is generally sold, offered or conducted elsewhere than upon the premises where such sign is located.

*Sign, pole* means a sign on a freestanding pole.

*Sign, projecting* means a sign attached to a building or other structure extending in whole or in part more than eighteen (18) inches beyond the building or structure.

*Sign, roof* means a sign erected on a roof or signs that project above the highest point of a roofline, parapet or fascia.

*Sign, single-faced* means a sign with one (1) face.

*Sign, temporary* means a sign which is intended to advertise community or civic projects, construction projects, real estate for sale or lease, or other special events on a temporary basis. See section 1010(g) (relating to temporary signs).

*Sign, wall* means a sign fastened to the wall or other surface of a building with a sign face approximately parallel to such wall or surface.

*Structure, outdoor advertising* means any structure of any kind or character erected or maintained for outdoor advertising purposes, upon or to which any outdoor advertising sign may be placed or attached.

#### Sec. 1007.

##### Zoning districts where signs are permitted

Signs shall be permitted in the zoning districts as set forth below and subject to the conditions of this section:

- (1) Business signs are permitted only in the I-1, I-2, C-1, B-1, B-2, B-3 and B-4 districts;
- (2) Directional signs are permitted in each and every zoning district;
- (3) Identification signs are permitted in each and every zoning district;
- (4) Outdoor advertising signs are permitted only in the I-1, I-2, C-1, and B-3 districts;
- (5) Temporary signs are permitted in each and every zoning district;
- (6) Integral roof signs are permitted in all zoning districts, except that no integral roof signs shall be permitted on a residential structure containing fewer than five (5) units. Roof signs, other than integral roof signs, are not permitted in any zoning district.
- (7) Changeable electronic signs which change more than once in a day and/ or the conversion on an existing outdoor advertising sign to a changeable electronic sign are allowed by special permit only, in I-1, I-2 and C-1 districts subject to the following conditions:**
  - a. The content of the sign does not change more frequently than once every 10 seconds
  - b. The static phase of display does not display any illumination that moves, appears to move or changes in intensity,
  - c. The illumination from the sign does not direct illumination at or intrude upon a residential neighborhood or residential district,
  - d. The brightness level of the illumination is found to be in harmony with the location of the sign,
  - e. The sign is found to be in harmony with adjacent and surrounding uses,
  - f. Changeable electronic outdoor advertising signs are restricted to locations within 250 feet of I-91, I-84 and Routes 5 and 15;
  - g. The size and height of changeable electronic outdoor advertising signs are the same as outdoor advertising signs that are allowed by special permit in I-1, I-2, and C-1 zoning districts.

Sec. 1008. Size of Signs.

Signs shall be subject to the following limitations of size:

(1) *I-1, I-2 and C-1 districts.* Outdoor advertising signs, **and changeable electronic signs**, shall have a maximum area of seven hundred fifty (750) square feet. The combined total area of all other permitted signs of a lot shall exceed not more than five (5) square feet of sign area per linear foot of lot frontage;

(2) *B-1 and B-2 districts.* The combined total area of all permitted signs on a lot shall exceed not more than three (3) square feet of sign area per linear foot of lot frontage;

1. Lots fronting on two (2) or more streets are allowed the permitted square footage of sign area for each street frontage; however, the square footage of sign area cannot be accumulated and used on one street in excess of the square footage of sign area allowed for that street frontage.

(3) *B-3 district.* Outdoor advertising signs shall have a maximum area of one hundred (100) square feet per face and only one (1) outdoor advertising sign per face shall be permitted. The combined total area of all other permitted signs on a lot shall exceed not more than two (2) square feet of sign area per linear foot of lot frontage. Lots fronting on two (2) or more streets are allowed the permitted square footage of sign area for each street frontage; however, the square footage of sign area cannot be accumulated and used on one (1) street in excess of the square footage of sign area allowed for that street frontage.

(4) *B-4 district.* The combined total area of all permitted signs on a lot shall exceed not more than one (1) square foot of sign area per linear foot of lot frontage. Lots fronting on two (2) or more streets are allowed the permitted square footage of sign area for each street frontage; however, the square footage of sign area cannot be accumulated and used on one (1) street in excess of the square footage of sign area allowed for that street frontage.

(5) *RO-1, RO-2, and RO-3 districts.* The combined total area of all permitted signs on a lot shall exceed not more than twenty (20) square feet on each street frontage; except that the total area of all permitted signs on an RO-1 campus shall be computed on the basis of thirty (30) square feet on each street frontage. Signs shall be permitted on an RO-1 campus in accordance with section 1014 of these regulations (relating to campus signage).

Notwithstanding all of the above, identification signs up to three hundred ninety (390) square feet are allowed in RO-1 and RO-2 districts, as long as the lowest extremity of the sign is affixed no more than twenty (20) feet below a roof line on a building that is six (6) or more stories high and its total gross square footage exceeds two hundred fifty thousand (250,000) square feet. Said identification signs shall be attached to the outside surface of the building and shall not protrude more than twelve (12) inches from the facade.

(6) *R-1, R-2, R-3, R-4, R-5, R-6, R-7 and R-8 districts:*

a. Identification signs for home occupations indicating only names of persons and their professions shall have a maximum area of one (1) square foot, and shall be limited to one (1) sign per dwelling unit,

b. Identification signs indicating names of residents and dwelling or dwelling unit numbers shall have a maximum area of one (1) square foot, and shall be limited to one (1) sign per dwelling unit,

c. Identification signs indicating the name and purpose of a structure and the name of its management shall have a maximum area of three (3) square feet, and shall be limited to one (1) sign per structure,

d. Directional signs solely for the control of traffic and parking shall have a maximum area of four (4) square feet,

e. Identification signs for churches, schools, colleges and universities, convalescent homes and community centers shall have a maximum area of twelve (12) square feet, and shall be limited to one (1) sign per major entrance to such use,

f. "For Sale" signs and "For Rent" signs shall have a maximum area of four (4) square feet and shall be located on the premises offered for sale or for rent, and shall be limited to one (1) sign per street frontage,

g. Temporary signs, other than "For Sale" or "For Rent" signs shall have a maximum area of twelve (12) square feet, and shall be limited to one (1) sign per lot,

h. Historical markers shall have a maximum area of four (4) square feet and may be placed only by a bona fide historical organization or by a governmental agency;

(7) *P district*. Permitted signs shall have a maximum area of twelve (12) square feet, except for highway signs.

(8) Notwithstanding the above, in all districts pole signs shall have sign faces no larger than thirty-six (36) square feet, unless otherwise specified in another article of these regulations.

#### Sec. 1009. Location and height of Signs

Signs shall be subject to the following limitations on location and height:

(1) No ground sign or pole sign, including its structure, shall exceed a height of thirty-five (35) feet in the I-1 and I-2 districts, thirty (30) feet in the C-1, B-1 and B-2 districts, twenty-five (25) feet in the B-3 district, twenty (20) feet in the B-4, RO-1, RO-2 and P districts, fifteen (15) feet in the RO-3, R-1, R-2, R-3 and R-4 districts, and ten (10) feet in the R-5, R-6, R-7 and R-8 districts. A pole sign shall have a minimum clearance of three (3) feet between the bottom of the sign and the ground;

(2) No business ~~or outdoor advertising~~ sign, including its structure, shall be attached to any building used in whole for residential purposes or situated on any property used in whole for residential purposes. ~~Any business or outdoor advertising sign, including its structure, which is attached to any building which is used for both residential and nonresidential purposes, shall be attached to the nonresidential portion of such building, except as provided in the following paragraph (3);~~

(3) No business ~~or outdoor advertising~~ sign, including its structure, shall, exceed the height of the window sill line of the second story of the building to which such sign is attached or of any adjacent building used in whole or in part for residential purposes. If the walls have no such window sill line, then the height provisions set forth in paragraph (1) shall govern;

(4) ~~Except as provided for in the B-3 district, a maximum of two (2) outdoor advertising signs shall be permitted per facing on an outdoor advertising structure or on a building which serves as an outdoor advertising structure where neither sign exceeds three hundred (300) square feet in area.~~ A maximum of one (1) outdoor advertising sign shall be permitted per facing on an outdoor advertising structure ~~or on a building which serves as an outdoor advertising structure when the sign exceeds three hundred (300) square feet in area;~~

(5) Outdoor advertising signs shall be spaced at a radius of not less than one thousand (1,000) feet from each other and except that two (2) or more such signs may be arranged to form a double-faced sign. ~~The one thousand (1,000) foot radius may be reduced to five hundred (500) feet if the applicant for a sign permit can demonstrate that a nonconforming outdoor advertising sign of similar type and with equal or greater square footage of sign area is being eliminated; however, no permit for the new outdoor advertising sign shall be issued until the nonconforming outdoor advertising sign which it replaces has been removed and an affidavit so stating has been filed with the zoning administrator;~~

(6) Business signs in the B-3 and B-4 districts may be located forward of the building line provided that all business signs shall be required to be set back a minimum of five (5) feet from the street line. The maximum sign height, including any sign pole, for a business sign located forward of the building line shall be thirteen (13) feet. A business sign located forward of the building line shall be required to have a minimum clearance of three (3) feet between the bottom of the sign and the ground. Ground signs in the B-3 and B-4 districts may be located forward of the building line and shall be limited to directional and identification signs, shall be set back a minimum of eight (8) feet from the street line and shall not be subject to the minimum ground to sign clearance of three (3) feet stated above. Notwithstanding the provisions of section 1010(f) (relating to landscaping), business and ground signs located forward of the building line shall be provided with a suitable, unpaved, properly maintained landscaped island of sufficient dimension to afford protection to the sign from all directions;

(7) No outdoor advertising sign shall be located within fifty (50) feet of an adjoining residential district if designed to face directly into such district and be visible there from;

(8) Historical markers may be placed only by a bona fide historical organization or by a governmental agency;

(9) The total area of all signs painted on or otherwise affixed to all windows shall be limited to not more than ten (10) percent of the total gross area permitted to the premises **and no signage on windows shall exceed 35 percent of the total window area;**

(10) Computation of sign height and ground clearance. The height of a sign shall be measured as the vertical distance from the grade at the base of the sign to the top of the highest component of the sign. The ground clearance of a sign under these regulations shall be measured as the vertical distance from the grade at the base of the sign to the top of the lowest component of the sign. For the purposes of this article, grade shall be computed as the average finished ground level of the land around the base of the sign, exclusive of any filling, berming, mounding, or excavating solely for the purpose of locating the sign.

(11) Except as otherwise provided in this section, all signs shall be located behind the building line. Notwithstanding the above, in determining the height of outdoor advertising signs located within six hundred sixty (660) feet of state highway right-of-way lines, grade shall be computed as the median height between the road surface of both travel lanes measured perpendicularly to the outdoor advertising sign structure. Should there be only one (1) travel lane, grade shall be computed as the median height between the road surface of the travel lane and normal grade measured perpendicularly to the outdoor advertising sign structure.

**(12) Outdoor advertising signs and changeable electronic signs shall be limited to free standing pole or structure signs.**

Sec. 1010. General type and use restrictions.

(a) Flashing, revolving, or animated signs and signs that make noise shall be prohibited, except that animated time, date, and temperature signs may be permitted. No sign shall use the word, "Stop," "Danger," or any other word, phrase, symbol or character that might be misconstrued to be a public safety warning or traffic signal. **Changeable electronic signs are prohibited except as provided for in Section 1007 (7).**

(b) Illuminated signs shall be so shielded as not to cast direct light onto any residential district or onto any property or building used in whole or in part for residential purposes.

(c) No sign shall violate the corner visibility provisions set forth in section 26 (relating to visibility at intersections).

(d) Signs not defined in this article shall not be permitted.

(e) In addition to the provisions set forth in these regulations, signs shall be subject to the provisions set forth in the state basic building code.

(f) Every ground or pole sign shall be provided with suitable ~~unpaved~~ properly maintained landscaping, covering the area between such sign and all adjacent property lines, except for any such area that is actively devoted to some other use. No more than one pole sign shall be located on any zoning lot, except that a shopping center may locate one pole sign at each vehicular entrance.

(g) Temporary signs other than "For Sale" or "For Rent" signs shall be permitted only for a period of one (1) month prior to and including the duration of the activity, which such sign describes and such signs shall be removed within one (1) week after the completion of the activity, which such sign describes.

(h) All signs, together with their supporting structure, shall be kept in good repair and in safe condition. The owner of the premises on which a sign is erected or located shall be directly responsible for keeping such sign and premises in a safe and neat condition.

(i) Nonconforming signs are existing signs of a size and type not permitted in the district in which they are located or which do not conform to all the provisions of these regulations. No nonconforming sign shall be altered or changed in any way unless it is made to conform to these regulations. A change shall not include the changes on a theatre marquee or changeable copy sign or copy billboards and shall not include normal maintenance activities. No sign described above shall be relocated, unless such relocation results in eliminating or reducing the nonconformity. Notwithstanding the provisions of section 40(g) (relating to restoration), any nonconforming sign, including its structure, which has been destroyed or damaged to the extent of fifty (50) percent or more of its replacement cost at the time such damage occurred, shall thereafter be made to conform to the provisions of these regulations. No new sign, of any type, shall be located, installed, mounted, painted or erected on a lot or zoning lot while a nonconforming sign, located thereon, remains. Notwithstanding the provisions of section 1009(5) (relating to spacing), the one thousand (1,000) foot radius requirement shall not apply to nonconforming outdoor advertising signs which are forced to be relocated due to condemnation or other federal, state, municipal or quasi-governmental agency action, provided the relocated outdoor advertising sign shall comply as closely as possible to the conditions and requirements set forth in section 1009 (relating to location and height).

(j) Signs applicable to a business which is temporarily suspended because of a change of ownership or management of such business for a period of six (6) months or more or any outdoor advertising sign which ceases to identify or advertise a bona fide business, service, owner, product or activity for a period of six (6) months or more shall be deemed abandoned. Such signs shall be removed by the owner of the premises on which the abandoned sign is located.

(k) Any sign, located forward of the building line shall be removed at no cost to the city should a land taking for public purposes be necessary.

(l) Banners, pennants and streamers shall be permitted only for a period of one (1) month prior to and including the duration of the activity which such sign describes and such sign shall be removed within one (1) week after the completion of the activity which such sign describes.

(m) Portable signs shall be permitted in the I-1, I-2, C-1, B-1, B-2, B-3, and B-4 districts, subject to the following restrictions: no more than one (1) portable sign per building lot. No portable sign shall be: larger than eight (8) square feet; displayed when winds exceed twenty (20) miles per hour; attached to the sidewalk or to city owned property, including but not limited to electric light poles and traffic signs; reflective; displayed after sundown or before sunrise; or displayed more than one (1) foot from the building line. The owner of any portable sign has an absolute duty to prevent such sign from causing any

property damage or personal injuries. If the zoning enforcement officer determines that a portable sign is unsafe or does not meet any of the conditions herein, the zoning enforcement officer shall issue a written warning to its owner requesting the correction of the unsafe or nonconforming condition. Only after this written warning is issued may the zoning enforcement officer proceed with the formal citation process set forth in Article II, Division 2 of these regulations (relating to violation and penalties).

Sec. 1011. Abandonment; removal.

Signs which are abandoned shall be completely removed, and the site of such sign shall be restored, within one (1) month of the date the zoning administrator gives notice of such designation to the owner of the sign.

Sec. 1012. Application.

Every application for a sign shall include the following information and exhibits, in triplicate:

- (1) Position of sign and its structure in relation to adjacent buildings or structures;
- (2) The design and size, structural details, and the dimensions proposed, and the proposed location on the premises of such sign and/or sign structure;
- (3) Statement showing the size, dimensions and location of all signs existing on the premises at the time of making the application;
- (4) Such other information as the zoning administrator shall require to show full compliance with these regulations and all applicable ordinances of the city.

Sec. 1013. Resolution for approval City Signs

The provisions of this article shall not apply to an application filed by the city for a zoning permit ~~and/or certificate of occupancy~~ for any sign located on city-owned property, provided such application is accompanied by a certified copy of a resolution adopted by the council approving the design, size, location and use of such sign.

Sec. 1014. Campus signage.

(a) *RO-1 district.* A campus shall be defined as any lot or zoning lot which contains ten (10) acres or more, contains two (2) or more principal structures and fronts on two (2) or more public streets.

(1) The zoning administrator may refer an application for a campus signage permit to the design review board for its recommendation. A comprehensive signage plan shall be required as part of all applications for a campus signage permit. When the board receives a referral, the board shall assist the zoning administrator by reviewing the comprehensive signage plan relative to size, height, context, materials, color, location, lighting and landscaping. The comprehensive signage plan shall include, but not be limited to:

- a. A plot plan of the lot or zoning lot at a scale not less than 1" = 40';
- b. The location of all buildings, parking lots, driveways and landscaped areas on the lot or zoning lot;
- c. The location of all existing and proposed signs and their relationship to buildings and structures as well as to the building, veranda and street lines;
- d. Computation of the total maximum sign area, the maximum area for individual signs, the height of all signs and the number of free standing signs allowed on the lot or zoning lot;
- e. Standards for consistency among all signs on the lot or zoning lot with particular regard to color scheme, lettering or graphics style, lighting, location of each sign on the building or

lot, materials and sign proportions.

(4) The total permitted square footage of sign area on a campus shall not exceed the aggregate of the total square footage permitted on each street frontage.

(5) The aggregate square footage permitted may be utilized anywhere on the lot or zoning lot in accordance with the approved comprehensive signage plan and provided no more than fifty (50) percent of the permitted gross square footage of sign area shall be used on any single street frontage.

(6) The following signs shall be exempt from the requirements of this section except that such signage shall be detailed as to location and size in the comprehensive signage plan:

a. Any public notice or warning required by a valid and applicable federal, state or municipal law, regulation or ordinance;

b. Any sign inside a building or structure, not attached to a window or door, that is not legible from a distance of more than three (3) feet beyond the lot line of the lot or zoning lot upon which such sign is located;

c. Traffic control signs on private property such as Stop, Yield, One Way and similar signs, the face of which contains no commercial message of any sort; however, the existence of a de minimis corporate logo or corporate name which is used to denote ownership of the sign shall not constitute a commercial message;

d. Publicly-owned memorial tablets, plaques or signs;

e. Signs displayed for convenience of the public including signs which identify restrooms, location of public telephones, public entrances, handicapped accessible entrance and exit locations, freight entrances or the like with a total surface area not to exceed four (4) square feet per surface; and

f. Any work of art which does not contain a commercial message.

(6) Any substantial changes or amendments to the approved comprehensive signage plan, as filed with the zoning administrator, shall be considered and processed as a new application.

Secs. 1015--1035. Reserved.